Branding: Models, Theory, Practice, and Marketing Implications

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Abstract
The article's purpose has been to conduct a thorough and analytical review of the empirical literature on branding and consumer behavior to uncover emerging issues and trends. It starts with a presentation of the objective of the article. This is followed by the research methodology employed. Next, the article assessed the relevant theoretical framework that underpins branding strategies and models. Then, the paper presents a rigorous analysis and synthesis of the current scientific literature on branding. This is followed by an assessment of emerging trends and issues in the field of branding derived from the literature review. Lastly, the article draws relevant implications for marketing and brand managers and outline relevant recommendations for action.
Keywords: Branding, Strategy, Marketing, Models, Theories

Introduction
        Brands have existed for centuries for quite simple reasons—they perform valuable roles and serve crucial functions. The diversity of roles and tasks for brands is pivotal to their existence. Investing in consumer brands can create intrinsic and extrinsic value in many ways to enhance consumers' lives. Whether offering functional or practical benefits or providing social, cultural, or psychological rewards, a brand can bring meaning to consumer lives. The value gained from brands is not the same in amount and nature among individuals, but it is unimaginable in a world where brands, viewed broadly, are not a crucial part of consumers' lives (Keller, 2021).
        Brands perform essential roles in consumers' lives: they use them to recognize products, assess product quality, and simplify alternatives. Moreover, consumers use brands to express their unique identity, emphasize group memberships, and develop opinions and perspectives about others. Brands are connected to extensive mental networks of brand associations established through consumers' interactions with a company's products and brand-related communications. These mental networks involve associations related to quality and other functional attributes. They also include more symbolic relationships that express

and reflect upon consumer identity. To capture the essence of brands to consumers, researchers present the notion of brand relevance (BR). Quantified at the product level, this construct deals with the degree to which consumers use brands (a) to lower the perceived risk of their purchase and (b) as a symbolic instrument to express their self-concept to others (Verlegh et al., 2021).

Consumer researchers occupy a unique position in investigating the dynamics of brand meaning within the marketplace. Research into consumers' experiences with brands shows a fluid and rich-meaning environment in which brands assist the consumer in developing their identities, structure individual and collective consumption behavior, and influence how the sociocultural environment evolves and further changes brand meanings. Whether they utilize institutional theory, Actor-network theory, social movements theory, or assemblage theory, consumer researchers perceive brands as integrated into a relational and dynamic network of actors, all of whom affect each other, eventually influencing a brand's cultural meaning. Digital communications, social media, and ever-expanding online connectivity make it possible for consumers to publicly communicate their perspectives of brands and observe others (Dietrich & Russell, 2021).

Consumer wants, needs, and preferences evolve. Brands compete in digitally connected, culturally diverse markets, and a large segment of consumers seek brands that bring together global and local elements (Schmidt-Devlin et al., 2022).

Objective of the Paper

This paper aims to analyze branding models and theories, outline some brand concepts, briefly discuss brand naming, positioning, advertising, heritage branding, contestation, authenticity, and technology, and draw marketing implications.

Research Methodology

A literature review entails searching, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing the most crucial and relevant issues assess in a field to spot trends and direction and to create new theoretical frameworks. In the area of branding, and other social sciences, academic investigators employed three primary literature review methodologies: bibliometric reviews, meta-analysis, and systematic/integrative reviews. Bibliometric studies rigorously analyze previous studies by utilizing statistical techniques to uncover trends and citations of a specific concept by year, author, journal, and research question. Meta-analysis is a quantitative review methodology that aims to aggregate directions and impact sizes by synthesizing findings across studies, evaluating those outcomes to uncover meaningful and methodological study characteristics that result in dissimilarities in research discoveries and assessing research hypotheses deploying data-analytic tactics and strategies. Systematic reviews present a critical deliberation on a particular research issue by analyzing and synthesizing previous and current literature, summarizing extant contributions, spotting knowledge gaps, and suggesting areas for further investigations. The research methodology adopted in this article utilized the systematic literature review process since it enables the author to use a transparent procedure, allowing the researcher to collect, analyze and synthesizing the broadest perspective of research in branding strategies (Adarkwah & Malonaes, 2022).

Models and Theories

Many frameworks of brands have been analyzed across many areas of inquiry, each with its unique emphasis. This paper presents three theoretical models (firm, consumer, and society) and two approaches within each model. The firm model views brands as resources and evaluates the different functions and roles that brands serve for companies financially and strategically. The consumer perspective sees brands as signals and mental knowledge cues. The society model analyzes brands in societal and cultural contexts influencing each consumer directly through social forces, structures, and institutions. The sociology of brands applies to all kinds of commercial and noncommercial organizations.

Firm Model

Strategic approach—Key issues analyzed in this approach entail creating and implementing brand identity; positioning, targeting, launch, and growth of brands; brand portfolio design; and execution of brands across geographic areas.

Financial approach—scholars utilizing a financial approach to branding have focused primarily on quantifying the impact of brand equity and branding actions on the capital market value of companies. Mainly, one line of research has focused on showing the usefulness of consumer-driven equity. In contrast, another stream of investigation has focused on quantifying the financial market effect of corporate practices, such as brand extensions, brand alliances, cobranding, and brand acquisition.

Consumer Perspective

Economic approach—Companies tend to be more knowledgeable than consumers regarding the quality of their brand. This information asymmetry has created a discipline that views brands as a market signal. The brand extension literature has utilized the information asymmetry-reducing function of brands to figure out (1) how a multiproduct company can brand a new offering, (2) the association between the reputation of the new offering and the reputation of an existing product in other markets, and (3) the perceived quality of a new offering.

Psychological approach—Consumer-psychological-of-brands model brings together the main concepts of the psychological approach, which suggests that brand equity resides in the minds of consumers. Brand knowledge, which is the mental representation of brand awareness (recall and recognition) and brand image (types, favorability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations), is the primary construct for developing and quantifying brand equity from the consumer's perspective. Other mental representations entail affecting emotions, resulting in constructs such as brand trust and emotional brand attachment. This approach also involves brand experience and defines them as sensors, intellectual impressions, and behavior toward brands.

Society Perspective

Sociological approach—scholars analyzing brands from a sociological lens focus solely on brands as portable containers of meaning that institutions and collectives influence from the time the brand is conceptualized, produced, and marketed through the post-purchase stage. Sociological models are usually dynamic and recursive. Sociological researchers do not view brands as static phenomena or as only information sources or knowledge storage; instead, they are keenly interested in how brand meanings are created, altered, and dynamically revised. A crucial concept in this literature is a brand community, a nongeographic space in

which brand consumers interact with one another and exhibit all three required characteristics of community: consciousness of kind, rituals, traditions, and moral obligation. Cultural approach— Sociologists and anthropologists study culture, and their research in branding and marketing significantly intersects. One of the critical insights from their research is that branded goods, as cultural meaning creators, improve consumers' lives. The most analyzed view on how brands become famous through their production of cultural resources is the widespread adaptation of consumer culture theory. Consumer culture theory explains the dynamic relationships among consumer behaviors, the marketplace, and cultural meanings. Research in this stream looks at how iconic brands, or brands incorporating cultural referents, contribute to culturally-driven consumption behavior and actions (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Theory
In the social media environment, the use of humor by a responding brand does not happen in isolation; consumers can view the original comment to which the brand responds. Thus, behaviors toward the responding brand may be affected by the kind of humor used in the response. Consumers may also take a holistic perspective, evaluating the appropriateness of the response in comparison to the initiating brand's original comments. Communication accommodation theory helps decide how communication between two brands will be interpreted. Originally developed to explain shifts in people's speech styles and patterns during a social exchange, CAT has developed into a valuable multifunctional theory in forecasting and understanding intergroup exchanges (Thomas & Fowler, 2021).

Empirical Literature Review
Definitions
A good basic definition of a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). As stipulated by this definition, the capacity to create awareness and meaning by offering consumers distinct and superior value is an essential branding principle. It is central to the success of brands (Keller, 2021). Branding is discovering things that make a firm unique and differentiating it from its competitors (Hall, 2021).

Cobranding is a brand alliance practice to increase reach, awareness, and sales potential by targeting the prospective customers of partnering brands. Several kinds of cobranding relationships can be found in the marketplace today. These include joint advertising campaigns, bundling, and cobranded products. Cobranding practices allow for brand extensions, with brand marketers capitalizing on the existing brand names of their partners to access new markets and product categories. Cobranding is also considered a valuable marketing approach. It has been proven to enhance awareness, quality, market value, and brand equity (Malhotra & Bhattacharyya, 2022).

Brand equity is a set of assets and liabilities associated with a brand, its name, and its symbol that enhances or lowers the value offered by its products or service to a company or that entity's customers (Rodrigue et al., 2021). In his brand equity model, Aaker (1991) identified five asset components that are the sources of brand equity: (a) brand associations (or brand image), (b) brand loyalty, (c) brand name awareness, (d) perceive brand quality, and (e) other propriety brand assets (patents, trademarks, channel relationship, etc.). He

suggested that having a clear identity is critical to achieving brand equity and creating a solid brand (Aaker, 1991).

At the foundation of branding is an understanding of the meaning individuals seek from brands. There are several ways to characterize brand knowledge. The following are some well-known dimensions:

Awareness—Category identification and needs satisfied by the brand.

Attributes—Descriptive features that characterize the brand intrinsically (e.g., related to product or service performance) or extrinsically (e.g., related to brand intangibles).

Benefits—Personal value and meaning that consumers attach to the brand's attribute (e.g., functional, symbolic, or experiential consequences from the brand's purchase or consumption).

Images—Visual information, either concrete or abstract

Thoughts—Personal cognitive responses to any brand-related information

Feelings—Personal affective responses to any brand-related information

Attitudes—Summary judgments and overall evaluations of any brand-related information

Experience—Purchase and consumption behaviors and other brand-related episodes (Keller, 2003). Brand associations that are favorable, robust, and distinctive distinguish brands from others. They are also an essential part of the equity attributable to owning a solid brand. Having favorable, strong, and unique brand associations is crucial when competing with a direct and well-resourced rival (Mcleod, 2021).

Brand Naming

Naming a brand is a crucial task for firms and brand managers alike. A good brand name can inspire the desired brand associations, increase brand awareness, influence quality inferences, and result in purchases. Contrarily, a brand name that inspires unintended brand associations may lead the brand to perform poorly. Enhanced awareness of the essence of a good brand name for a company's eventual success has increased interest in brand naming research over several decades.

One line of research has investigated the impacts of semantic cues on brand names, brand perceptions, and memory. For instance, research reveals that a brand name communicating a product's benefits (e.g., Picture Perfect TV) enhances consumers' recall of the benefits claim. Research also suggests that brand name memorability can be improved with nonwords, as they are more distinctive than actual words. Finally, research findings show that the typeface of a brand name can express a particular meaning, such as luxuriousness, and can influence consumers' ad recall.

Another line of research in the sound symbolism literature investigates how the phonetic structure of a brand name impacts the meaning inferred by consumers. For instance, research reveals that products with brand names with front vowel sounds (e.g., i) are viewed as smaller and colder than those with back vowel sounds (e.g., a). Research also shows that an ice cream brand name having front vowel sounds (e.g., Frish) is viewed as less rich and creamy than a similar brand name having back vowel sounds (e.g., Frosh). Together, these lines of research demonstrate that brand naming is both an art and a science. Even tiny differences in a brand name may significantly influence consumers' assessments (Zhang et al., 2022).

Brand names are the only crucial verbal information transmitted in persuasion messages (e.g., word-of-mouth communications and online reviews). Research shows that a brand name size cue can increase consumers' perceptions of the brand's warmth or

competence. While company size is typically driven by market success and cannot be determined ex-ante, the brand name is a marketing instrument that can be predetermined by marketers (particularly for new brands). Research suggests that firms can adopt size cues of smallness (bigness) in the brand name to signal warmth (competence)-related attributes (Zhang et al., 2022).

Brand Positioning

The strategic activity of brand positioning points s to marketers' choosing as its target markets (1) a subset of demand creating conditions to deal with a responsive offering and (2) the consumers who experience such conditions. Brand positioning aims to impact the brands prospects prefer in the marketplace. The brand strategy focuses on creating a brand to claim and deliver value to prospects to where they want to be to provide a firm with an above-industry average return on investment. Brand positioning analysis entails a further revision of answers to strategic questions in light of the target market, the state of want satisfaction, alternative products, and efficient utilization of firms' assets (Fannell & Allenby, 2004).

As an essential task, brand positioning depends on the firm's conducting an iterative assessment of the gains a product can achieve by developing it to respond to some regions of the different types of consumer demand. For a demand segment, companies review the existing state of need satisfaction provided by current products to evaluate its capability profitably to enhance existing offerings. Such an evaluation considers the rivalry's possible dominance in a market segment. Segments served by strong competitors are seen as less attractive than those served by weak rivals. If a rival company does not already have the segment locked up, specific characteristics are uncovered in response to the demand-creating conditions. Such characteristics can be physical and psychological. Marketers evaluate the likely credibility and appeal of the value proposition identified by the firm (Fannell & Allenby, 2004).

Brand Advertising

When getting the brand's message to its target markets—those prospects with needs the brand has been tailored for. Marketers select specific media within that broad range from the initial selection of communications medium (e.g., national TV, print, or billboards). Delivering the message to the brand's targets has to be implemented in two phases—selecting media instruments that expose the message in the presence of target consumers and gaining the attention of consumers among those prospects by what is highlighted and said in the advertising strategy (Fannell & Allenby, 2004).

When consumers are exposed to images in advertising, they extract inferences about the characteristics exhibited by the advertised brand. When an advertising image serves as a metaphor for a brand-attribute claim, consumers generate more favorable inferences about the brand's attributes when they interact with the image, even when there are no text-based references. When consumers generate inferences about the attributes exhibited by a brand, these brand-attribute connections are subject to fewer counterarguments and are more robust and accessible. The interference that results from response competition can be used strategically to accomplish this objective (Saenger et al., 2017).

Research supports advertising practices in which image-based contextual interference facilitates the acceptance of new attributes and information into the meaning of a familiar target brand. This strategy is most useful when (1) a target brand's advertisement features a stylistically varied version of an image also featured in an interfering brand's advertisement,

(2) the advertising images express the meaning of the target brand's desired new attribute, and (3) the interfering brand is a rival in the same product category as the target brand that exhibits the desired new attribute. When firms meet these benchmarks, consumers more easily incorporate new attribute information into brand meaning. This has been evidenced by exhibiting faster and more favorable agreement that the target brand exhibits its desired attribute (Saenger et al., 2017).

Heritage Branding

Many brands have offerings that, over time, assist in defining the brand's identity and value proposition to target markets. These offerings are often known as flagship or signature products (e.g., Levi's 501 blue jeans). Brands often attempt to stimulate demand for their flagship products through heritage branding, a marketing strategy highlighting a brand's time-tested history and values. However, brands may revise or enhance such offerings to address changing consumer preferences and tastes. Heritage branding offers value to consumers in many ways: It does increase expectations about product quality based on the assumption that the offerings have withstood the test of time. It also offers intangible sources of value, including a genuine connection to history and a sense of permanence. Researchers have assessed how famous heritage brands create value for the consumer through a diverse set of practices. For instance, brands like Anheuser-Busch emphasize longevity and multi-generational family ownership. Heritage brands have also been viewed as enhanced value through their connection to sincerity characteristics and core values. Heritage branding also can increase consumer perceptions even when the brand is unfamiliar (Han et al., 2021).

An effective heritage branding strategy requires that consumers perceive those claims as genuine. Hence, heritage branding is a marketing approach that focuses on specific claims about a brand or product, whereas authenticity is a subsequent perception of the credibility of those claims. Authenticity developed from consistency between a brand's external expressions and internal values is integrity authenticity. Here, the consistency of interest is not temporal but based on perceptions of the company's commitments and guiding ethos. For instance, brands high in integrity and authenticity tend not to be driven by financial motives but rather act in a manner that reinforces a specific set of internally held core values (Han et al., 2021).

Brand Contestation

Investigating brand contestation through many lenses and analytical approaches shows that their contestation can promote antifragility, a notion borrowed from other academic fields and newly used in brands and marketing. First introduced by researchers, antifragility is similar to posttraumatic growth in which stressors, despite unanticipated and often adverse outcomes, are a source of strength. Unlike resilience, which attempts to avoid or resist stressors to sustain the current system, antifragility welcomes complexity and dynamism. This is because it can be utilized to strengthen and enhance the brand (Dietrich & Russell, 2021)

Although some consumers integrate brands into their daily lives and develop a positive connection with them, others react to brands in a negative and even hostile manner. Consumer brand actors' behavior can have a profound yet varied impact on brands. Consumer brand actors typically disrupt their pursuit of unique interests through conspicuous brand consumption. In response, consumers renegotiate their perception of the brand and whether and how it matches their identity. Some consumers may create a movement to challenge the legal owners' domination over a brand or to challenge more established

participants. Others may be in the mainstream, some cases as passive observers. Expression, the third of these dimensions, reflects the more active behavioral engagement phase of contestation. In this phase, resistance or discontent can lead to boycotts, anti-brand activism, or sabotage (Dietrich & Russell, 2021).

Brand Authenticity

Like other sociological frameworks built on interrelated systems of meaning, brands are also integrated into the sophisticated sociocultural fabric of postmodern marketplaces. Brands have many publics, each with its unique view of the brand. Brands motivate and facilitate subcultures of consumption. Moreover, communities are established around brands and brand-inspired practices. These communities influence brands' authenticity, sustaining life into brands even after the legal owners stop supporting them. Communities bend, mend, and alter brands in manners that do not always conform with how other communities conceive them (Dietrich & Russell, 2021).

There is a general agreement in the marketing literature that the authenticity of a firm is a socially constructed notion based on the degree to which the organization is considered authentic to itself. Authenticity evaluations depend on consumers' perceptions, corresponding to a subjective assessment and not necessarily on attributes embedded in the object or brand. Perceived authenticity reflects the extent to which consumers believe a firm is faithful to and matches a point of reference against which they judge and compare that firm. If a firm seems true to itself and avoids pretense, the frontage corresponds with the backstage. In a brand setting, perceived authenticity is a function of whether the brand is perceived as corresponding to the real thing or an ideal. A perception that a brand is authentic reflects an external assessment of whether it matches the attributes of the original object (de Kerviler et al., 2022).

The pursuit of authentic and ethical brands is a bedrock of contemporary marketing; The objective of many brands aim to signal authenticity and ethical values to achieve competitive edges. Research suggests that marketers could utilize the associations in the minds of their consumers between authenticity cues and the perceived ethicality of brands(de Kerviler et al., 2022).

Technology and branding

In the long term, brand creation and management will change radically. Like all business spheres, technology has and will continue to significantly influence how brands are managed, performed in the marketplace, and operated in society. As mentioned above, the core principle of marketing and branding continues to be to meet the needs and wants of consumers better than rivals. Established brands have consistently invested in innovation and continue to be relevant to achieve long-term success, and technology has always played an essential role in those pursuits (Keller, 2021).

Modern technologies have influenced virtually all areas of consumer behavior, for instance, how they learn, shop, buy, consume, and communicate satisfaction and loyalty. Moreover, technology has empowered consumers to learn more about a brand. It also assists brand managers in learning more about consumers. In theory, technological advancement should assist marketers in designing products to satisfy consumer needs and enable consumers to identify and select the brands they admire and prefer (Keller, 2021).

Emerging Issues and Trends from the Above Literature Analysis

Just as social media has enabled consumers to contribute to a brand's story, brands can more readily influence consumers' perceptions of other, potentially competing brands. By extending communication accommodation theory into a social media and branding context, research demonstrates that brand-to-brand dialogue shapes consumers' attitudes toward both brands as well as their intentions to engage on social media, identifying a previously unexplored antecedent of brand attitudes and social media engagement (Thomas & Fowler, 2021). Addressing consumer worries in brand communication positively influences consumers' brand attitude and strengthens their connection with the brand, particularly among consumers with higher levels of worry. Collectively, research findings consolidate the essential roles of brands in individuals' lives as they act as a source of identity formation and expression for consumers and offer them structure when facing anxiety and adversity (Verlegh et al., 2021).

Likewise, empirical finding shows that a brand name size cue can heighten consumers' perceptions of the brand's warmth or competence. While firm size is often driven by market performance and cannot be decided ex-ante, the brand name is a marketing tool that can be predetermined by brand managers (especially for new brands). Moreover, research suggests that companies can use size cues of smallness (bigness) in the brand name to signal warmth (competence)-related traits. In addition, consumers often use brands for self-expression and rely on brands to express or enhance their degree of masculinity or femininity. Academic investigation also shows that size cues of smallness (bigness) in a brand name can lead to greater perceptions of femininity (masculinity) of a brand (Zhang et al., 2021).

Moreover, there is an inevitability of brand contestation. Across all industries, it is observed that consumers have the ability to appropriate, shape, and affect brand meanings and the range of such contestations. Research findings generally reflect an acceptance that consumer brand actors must be incorporated into the management of their brands. However, tensions exist regarding how such management should involve using/recycling/channeling the brand actors' consumption. On the one hand, some research conveyed the classic brand management view that legal owners must protect the brand from uncontrollable forces. On the other hand, in a twist of brand-focused and consumer-focused research, a perspective emerges in which brand managers have become consumers of the brand materials produced in the marketplace (Dietrich & Russell, 2021).

Similarly, the management of brands is likely to evolve in profound ways. Like all aspects of business, technology has and will significantly impact how brands operate in the marketplace and society and how firms and organizations manage them. As always, the core principle of marketing has been and continues to be to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers better than competitors. To gain long-term success, leading brands have continually innovated to stay relevant, and technology has often played a vital role in those pursuits (Keller, 2021).

Lastly, creating brand associations linking emotions and feelings can strengthen loyalty, increase differentiation, and drive engagement. In the future, brand marketers will better appreciate the unique value and rewards created through brand effect in these ways and develop more refined taxonomies and research-supported guidelines. They will also find ways to tie emotions and feelings more closely to product and service performance and invoke them more effectively from other intangibles related to past, present, and future considerations (Keller, 2021). Aligning with established brands, such as sponsors and media partners, impacts brand success before entering a new market. Because it can help grow

brand awareness or perceived quality by improving their broadcast delivery (Rodrigue et al., 2021).

Implications for Marketing and Brand Managers

Brands are the essential valuable intangible resources of a firm, a product, or a person. Brand value derives from creating a distinctive set of brand associations in the minds of consumers that produce positive images, establish differentiation, build loyalty, and establish competitive advantages. Brand value entails functional, emotional, or self-expressive rewards. Successful firms create trust and loyalty toward their brand by developing an emotionally solid and personal relationship with their customers. Hence, brand management became an accepted marketing practice in many economies. Firms must allocate considerable resources to launch new brands and capitalize on existing ones to obtain competitive superiority over their competitors(Rodrigue et al., 2021).

Brands' functional and symbolic functions are likely to become very useful in times of uncertainty when consumers are searching for ways to lower stress and deal with anxieties. Product managers should be very conscious of brands' significance and seek ways to support consumers as they try to cope with anxieties. They should also revise their advertising practices to acknowledge consumer anxiety and promote brands by offering emotional support and social congruence (Verlegh et al., 2021).

As part of the sustained interest and significance, there is always a desire to predict the future of brands and branding. Such speculation can be of value to brand managers as they contemplate how to allocate marketing assets and invest in their internal capabilities. It is well-known that many factors have influenced and will continue to affect brands and how they are created and managed. Unquestionably, one of the most crucial variables affecting brands and branding is technology, which has enhanced the capabilities of marketers in diverse ways (Keller, 2021).

Regarding managerial implications, heritage branding is a common practice in which companies can enhance perceptions of brand value. Research suggests that marketers should use heritage branding cautiously, as emphasizing specific cues may eventually reduce consumer evaluations of enhanced products. Research also offers specific and practical recommendations for the variety of ways that brands can avoid backlash from consumers. For instance, companies can develop brand heritage by emphasizing cues related to integrity, such as core values. Likewise, brands can reframe enhanced products by aligning with the brand's history. By so doing, a brand can promote its continuity while also being true to consumers' expectations that it should stay connected with its traditional origin (Han et al., 2021). Marketers should collect, document, store, and report brand and market data, intelligence, and information in a harmonized way in order to share insights and similarities identified (Schmidt-Devlin et al., 2022).

Moreover, consumers typically use brands for self-expression and depend on brands to communicate or increase their masculinity or femininity. Research shows that size cues of smallness (vs. bigness) in a brand name can result in higher perceptions of a brand's femininity (vs. masculinity). Research also emphasizes the importance of the congruency between size cues and gender positioning. Particularly, marketers need to know how the connection triggered by the size cues is consistent with the brand positioning and other marketing instruments (Zhang et al., 2022).

Lastly, research alerts marketers to the significance of grasping the gender stereotypes held by target consumers. A size cue is a more valuable marketing tool in cultures with

stronger gender stereotypes (e.g., China or the United States) as opposed to those with weaker gender stereotypes (e.g., Sweden or Norway (Zhang et al., 2022).

Recommendations for Managerial Decision-Making

Based on the above analysis, the following recommended suggestions are in order. First, all visual elements—logos, color palette, shapes, typefaces, characters, backgrounds, photos, and any other style—combine to present the face of the brand, termed visual brand identity. Managers should consider not only the implications of similar visual elements and the effects of visual brand identity, but also investigate websites, email promotions, or social media pages (notably, Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat, which rely heavily on images to communicate the brand message) in addition to the print media (Saenger et al., 2017).

Second, brand managers must recognize how the associations triggered by the size cues fit the brand positioning and other marketing tools. Moreover, marketers should be alerted to the importance of understanding the more excellent stereotypes target consumers hold. A size cue may be a more effective marketing tool in cultures with strong gender stereotypes (e.g., China or the United States) than in those with weaker gender stereotypes (e.g., Sweden or Norway) (Zhang et al., 2021).

Third, research suggests that firms develop strategic communications, offer contact information, publicly acknowledge partnerships, and define their connections with stakeholders. The literature has underscored the importance of communications, expectations, and stakeholder-organization partnerships. Moreover, sharing resources could materialize differently by identifying the partners' assets, sharing resources, or enabling brand utilization. Cross-promotion and openly sharing brand strategy could also benefit both sides and enhance brand equity (Rodrigue et al., 2021).

Fourth and lastly, understanding brands and branding in this rapidly evolving environment requires even keener insights into consumers and consumer behavior. The two are inextricably linked and opposite sides of the same coin: Brands exist for consumers, and consumers seek and value brands. For marketers, the challenge is how to get inside the minds and hearts of consumers and how to influence their hands and feet simultaneously (Keller, 2021).

Concluding Remarks

Brands are generally viewed as a source of meaning for consumers, reducing risks and reemphasizing identity. Consumers experience a personal relationship with the brands they consume and admire, and these brands typically become part of their extended self-concept. Research findings point to the significance of brands as the bedrock of consumption experiences that enable consumers to establish a notion of order (Verlegh, et al., 2021).

Research findings also show that acknowledging and addressing consumers' concerns benefits both parties: consumers are reassured. They can restore a sense of personal control, and companies benefit from enhanced brand identification. Brands also serve as safe havens in times of uncertainty when consumers seek structure beyond formal authorities (Verlegh et al., 2021).

Brands will be operating in a world influenced by strategic forces that potentially alter all areas of company management and branding practices. The changing marketing landscape will impact both private and public enterprises, as well as firms big and small. As crucial as those factors might be, however, it is essential to note that a yearning for stability characterizes certain institutions, markets, and people. Like much of marketing, future brand

fortunes will depend on the net effect of opposing forces such as continuity and change (Keller, 2021). The concepts of consumption and consumerism are the main drivers of consumers in a highly commercialized society, a society driven by branding, marketing, and advertising (Hall, 2021).

Finally, through the critical analysis of the existing empirical body of work into branding, the contribution of this article is the discovery of the theoretical and contextual correlation between firms' success and the alignment of their strategies with the drivers of emerging trends in branding practices and consumer behavior. Moreover, the significance of the paper lies in its contribution to the understanding of the effects of the design and formulation of brand strategy by highlighting a mechanism underpinning the favorable impacts of the drivers of emerging trends in brand practices. Hence this article thus establishes a connection between the ease of brand strategy design and emerging branding issues; thereby adding to extant knowledge about the need of integrating the drivers of emerging branding trends in the design of marketing strategies (Luffarelli et al., 2019). Furthermore, the article identifies the significance of brand equity and consumer loyalty. It also extends the current knowledge by integrating the synergistic effects that represents brand innovation and its complementary strategies on brand equity that in turn impact the different phases of consumer behavior and loyalty in context (Xu, et al., 2014).

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